

Building an Iraqi Defense Force

by Joseph McMillan

Key Points

With the demise of the Saddam Hussein regime, a high priority must be the rebuilding of the Iraqi armed forces. The United States must supervise and assist in this task, but the template for the new force should not be the American model—a joint, highly trained, all-volunteer force that emphasizes quality over size. Iraq does not need and cannot produce such a U.S.-style force.

What Iraq *does* need is a military that provides for self-defense while complementing political reformation—or at least not undermining it. What the region and the world need is the assurance that the new Iraqi military will not threaten the peace anew.

Shaping a new force's capabilities in the short term is therefore far less important than creating institutions by which a legitimate civilian government can control and monitor the development, funding, and employment of the military and ensuring the development within the new military of attitudes and patterns of behavior that reinforce the new constitutional political order at home and peace and stability abroad.

These goals can be met by a force that is based on conscription, which is the regional norm, provided that it is led by a new and more inclusive officer corps and shaped by a recast military education system. The resulting active force of about 350,000—considerably smaller than the combined regular and irregular forces before the war—would be sufficient for defense against external threats without posing a threat to Iraq's neighbors.

The reconstruction and reform of the Iraqi armed forces will inevitably take place in the context of both Iraq's present and past. Saddam Hussein and his predecessors, going back to the creation of the state, have left Iraq a legacy of endemic domestic political violence, dysfunctional civil-military relations, and, in recent decades, an ideology of unremitting hostility to virtually every one of Iraq's neighbors.

The use of Iraqi armed forces for internal repression is often associated with Saddam. Most people are aware of the brutal 1987–1989 Anfal campaign, which resulted in the systematic slaughter of at least 50,000 Kurdish men, women, and children¹ and ethnic cleansing operations in southern Iraq in the early 1990s that caused the deaths or forced displacement of over 200,000 Marsh Arabs.² Though Saddam certainly escalated the army's role as an agent for repressing the Iraqi people, he did not originate it. On the contrary, this was one of the main purposes for which the army was developed.³ From the 1930s onward, the army carried out summary executions of combatants and noncombatants alike, razing of villages, and aerial bombardment to suppress any and all challenges to the authority of the central government, even by such numerically insignificant groups as the Assyrians and Yazidis. As the historian Charles Tripp observes:

The use of violence to suppress dissent, much of which took violent form itself, has been reproduced and elaborated by central governments in Baghdad since the foundation of the state. Indeed, control of the means of violence has been one of the lures for those who seized the state apparatus. The result has

*been not only the prominence of the armed forces, but also the proliferation of security services which have introduced a baneful logic to Iraq's political life.*⁴

From the beginning, to be an officer was one of the main paths to political power and social advancement in Iraq. With the exception of the royal family, the makers of the Kingdom of Iraq were predominantly former officers of the Ottoman Imperial Army, mainly Sunni Arabs from modest families who rose to the top through military service.⁵ Eight of the 22 prime ministers under the monarchy and all 4 presidents of the republic before Saddam were career military men. Their combined tenure in office covered 43 of the 58 years from the installation of the first Iraqi cabinet in 1921 until Saddam assumed full power in 1979. At least 10 times in Iraq's history, the army intervened to change the government, either by actual coup, threatened coup, or political pressure. Even when civilian politicians headed the government, the officer corps was the most important base of political support. In several cases, civilian prime ministers served simply as front men for cabals of officers.

With these officers in the vanguard, the ruling elite in Baghdad developed an intensely centralizing, nationalistic, authoritarian ideology that justified the use of force—and hence of the army—as an indispensable component of national development. This principle, along with the corollary that the military should be actively involved in politics, was propagated to new generations of officers through their training at the Iraqi Military Academy.⁶ It was in this overheated praetorian milieu that younger officers developed the “free officers” movement that would oust the

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monarchy in 1958, and in which still younger ones would orchestrate the coup that brought the Ba'ath to power 10 years later.

Saddam's Legacy

Until the rise of Saddam in the early 1970s, Iraqi governments did not exercise civilian control over the military; the military exercised control over them. Saddam finally succeeded in imposing civilian political control through an enormously intrusive and destructive system of purges, executions, internal security monitoring, political indoctrination, and competitive parallel military organizations.⁷ Indeed, it was probably his success in curbing the institutional power of the army as much as his inflated military pretensions and the damage he did to the nation that motivated the deep resentment that many Iraqi career soldiers harbored toward him by the time he fell from power.

The civilian control that Saddam established over the military came at a heavy price. Even before their defeat at the hands of the coalition, the Iraqi armed forces were in serious trouble. The dismal condition of their weaponry after 12 years of sanctions was the least of their problems. Like the rest of Iraqi society, the armed forces were corrupt and demoralized; members had been terrorized by the brutal systems of control established by Saddam to ensure their loyalty. The corporate professional ethic that had built up within the officer corps over the course of the 1980–1988 Iran-Iraq war was systematically crushed by the regime as an implicit challenge to the Leader's omnipotence and omniscience. The thorough penetration of the armed forces by political and security officers and their informers made impossible the kind of mutual trust and respect on which effective command relationships depend. The regular army (that is, units other than the Republican Guard) was particularly affected in personal terms by the impact of economic sanctions, with officers and men alike forced to shirk their military duties in order to provide for their families. Desertion and absence without leave were endemic.

Social Attitudes

Like any military force, the Iraqi armed forces reflected to some degree the society from which they sprang. Iraq enters its new era with a population that has been immersed in a cult of militarism. In emulation of the European fascist regimes of the day, compulsory military training was introduced in Iraqi schools in 1935–1936 and continued right up to the fall of Saddam. Generations of Iraqis have been indoctrinated to believe that their nation is in danger from a host of external enemies, especially Iran,

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Israel, and imperialism, as well as internal enemies, and they have been taught to glorify the armed forces and their achievements.

The extent to which ordinary Iraqis still share that vision is open to speculation. Many undoubtedly see the army, along with the other security services, as an instrument of decades of repression—as the enemy of the people, not their protector. Moreover, the prestige of the military services cannot be high after their poor performance against U.S. forces. It is probable that the unrepresentative nature of the force has been a matter of public unhappiness; while Sunni Arabs make up somewhere between 15 and 20 percent of the population, a small self-perpetuating elite drawn from that minority constituted 80 percent of the officer corps. Conversely, conscription in the enlisted ranks—especially in the poorly supported regular army—fell with disproportionate weight on the Shi'a population.⁸ At the same time, other military forces have treated their conscripts and the populations from which they sprang with great brutality (the Soviet Army comes to mind) yet have continued to enjoy a sizable reservoir of popular respect and even affection. Only when it is possible to conduct detailed public opinion polling and get frank and open answers will there be any way of knowing what Iraqis think about the military.

Of course, American officials engaged in the rebuilding effort will need to be aware that such attitudes will have an enormous impact on what is politically sustainable.

The Burden of History

Even if Iraqis have a low opinion of their own military, they will nevertheless take a skeptical attitude toward U.S. attempts at defense reform. Most will view American initiatives in military reconstruction through the lens of their previous experience with foreign occupiers. As has already been widely observed, statements that “the United States seeks to liberate Iraq, not to occupy Iraq”⁹ sound to Iraqis like an echo of the proclamation issued by Lieutenant General Sir Stanley Maude when British troops took Baghdad in 1917: “Our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators.”¹⁰ Iraqis also recall that British mandatory officials in the 1920s rejected the need for conscription, that the British military training mission in the 1930s functioned to restrict Iraqi decisionmaking, that British occupation forces during World War II purged the Iraqi army of radical nationalists, and that the withdrawal of British forces after World War II was conditioned on Iraqi agreement to allow contingency access to key air bases and to accept British oversight of Iraqi defense planning. All these incidents have parallels in the issues that will confront U.S. officials in considering how to rebuild the Iraqi force today. Above all, Iraqis will suspect that the United States is pursuing a hidden agenda in abetting the revival of an Iraqi military—an agenda they will assume to be dominated by the interests of Israel and the American oil and armaments industries.

Finally, we must keep in mind in building a new Iraqi defense force that the Iraqi armed forces under Saddam did not constitute the only significant military institution in the country. Including the Republican Guard, the armed forces are estimated to have totaled some 390,000 active duty personnel¹¹ at the start of Operation *Iraqi Freedom*. On top of that were roughly 15,000 members of the Special Republican Guard, as many as 40,000 thugs of the paramilitary Fedayeen Saddam, and an indeterminate number of the Ba'ath Party's People's Militia, an organization that once numbered over one million. The coalition must decide what to do not only with these forces but also those on the other side—the

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sizable Kurdish and Shi'ite militias that sprang up in opposition to Saddam's rule. By most estimates, each of the main Kurdish parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, could put 10,000 to 15,000 fighters into the field, while the Badr Brigades operating under the auspices of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) had up to another 15,000. Other antiregime groups probably accounted for 2,000 to 3,000 more men under arms. The future of these forces must also be taken into account, notwithstanding whatever role their members may have played in the liberation.

Priority Tasks

What are the most crucial areas that the United States should focus on in helping develop a new Iraqi defense force? Essentially, they are those tightly interrelated issues that lie at the political-military nexus between any constitutional government and the armed forces that serve it:

- how national security policy is determined through the political process
- how the legitimate government exercises control over armed forces
- how national resources—both human and financial—are allocated to military purposes
- how the military force reflects and interacts with the society at large.

The processes by which the new Iraqi government will formulate security policy lie beyond the scope of this paper, but several key points should be made. First, unless the new government embraces the principles set forth in the United Nations (UN) Security Council resolutions that terminated the 1990–1991 Gulf War, there will be no way to rebuild the Iraqi military that does not eventually endanger regional security all over again. These principles include not only the permanent renunciation of weapons of mass destruction, which has received the greatest attention over the years, but also the renunciation of territorial claims against Iraq's neighbors and of the use of force to change the regional status quo. Secondly, the new government must develop more legitimate, consensual means of dealing with the country's ethnic, religious, and tribal cleavages.

An Accountable Military

Creating institutional mechanisms for civilian control of the military and the security services will be one of the greatest tests facing

the new Iraqi government. Any remnants of Saddam's system of control must be eradicated. That system is hostile to both military effectiveness and a healthy civil-military relationship. Those who operated it were the most irredeemable of the old regime's supporters and in many cases indictable war criminals. Assuming that Iraq adopts a European-style parliamentary political structure, a system of parliamentary accountability should be established to ensure civilian control of the military. Ideally, a civilian member of parliament¹² should be appointed as minister of defense,

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given the support of a trained civilian staff, and placed squarely in the chain of command for both operational and administrative purposes. The model is a familiar one in the West, but not in the Arab world or even the broader Islamic world. The United States and United Kingdom can play a key role in the development of these institutions, especially in the training of staffs, but even more valuable might be the advice of countries, such as Spain and Poland, that underwent the process of transformation from dictatorship to democracy in the fairly recent past.

Particular attention should be given to parliamentary control over military budgets, including not only the amounts budgeted but also the uses for which funds are programmed and the follow-up accounting to ensure that they are properly disbursed. Given the culture of corruption that has long characterized Iraq, it will be difficult to stop the diversion of government funds to private pockets. While meeting this challenge is important, it is more critical for the representative government to ensure that funds are not siphoned off to the development of capabilities within the military that undercut a government policy of peace abroad and civil liberties at home.

Making parliamentary control work will require sweeping changes in the leadership of the new Iraqi defense force. Many Iraqi officers

resented Saddam, but this does not mean that they—even those who went into exile—held views conducive to a healthy civil-military relationship under a constitutional system of government. Indeed, the chauvinistic, authoritarian mindset of the old Iraqi officer corps must be cleared away if the new Iraqi military is not to revert to old habits. At a minimum, all general officers should be retired and barred from future involvement with the armed forces. It goes without saying that all former political and security officers and anyone who was ever in the Special Republican Guard should also be banned for life, if not imprisoned. It may very well be that anyone who served as an officer in the Republican Guard, regardless of rank, will also have to be excluded, although service in the Republican Guard was not always voluntary—a number of officers and men were ordered into the Guard because of their professional qualifications, not for political reasons.¹⁵

In any case, it will be necessary to apply a careful review process—similar to that used in post-war Germany and again when the Bundeswehr took over the former East German Volksarmee after unification—to determine which officers, whether regular or Republican Guard, are fit for service under the new dispensation. The process will inevitably and intentionally result in the decimation of the Iraqi officer corps as it existed under the old regime. For all practical purposes, a new officer corps will have to be built from scratch. This will undoubtedly delay the recovery of the Iraqi military as a qualitatively effective force vis-à-vis such threats as Iran, but this is a price that must be paid.

Dealing with Militias

The sorts of militias maintained by the Kurdish parties and the SCIRI, while justifiable as instruments of resistance against Saddam's tyranny, are nonetheless rightly prohibited under the old Iraqi constitution,¹⁴ as they are by the constitutions or laws of most countries. The failure of previous governments to enforce this provision against the militias raised by the Ba'ath Party was a key element in Saddam's rise to power, and it is hard to see how such militias could be allowed to continue outside some sort of governmental control without undermining the legitimacy and credibility of a

constitutional government. The specific solution to this problem will depend in large measure on the shape of the constitutional system that is adopted; clearly, a pure federal structure will require different arrangements than a basically unitary state with limited devolution of powers to the various governorates. In either case, Iraq might consider establishing an organization similar to the Pakistani Frontier Corps, in which the enlisted ranks are filled by voluntary recruitment from local tribal communities—including the current *peshmerga*—while the officer cadre is provided by the regular national army.

Reforming the Ranks

Attention should also be given to integrating the leaders of opposition militias into the officer corps of the new defense force. The new Iraqi government should look closely at the similar experience of South Africa as it integrated African National Congress and other forces into the South African Defense Force after the end of apartheid. This process will accelerate the attainment of broader representation for the Shi'ite and minority communities in the new military leadership, something that is essential if a replay of the Iraqi army's historic role as an enemy of Iraqi society is to be avoided.

The coalition should insist that the new Iraqi government completely revamp the selection procedures and curriculum of the military academy (historically the overwhelming source of new officers) and staff college to ensure that these institutions do not continue propagating the aggressively nationalistic mindset that has traditionally characterized past graduates. Heavy emphasis should be laid on developing a professional ethos—an organizational culture that values apolitical competence and demands service to the duly constituted civil government regardless of personal agreement or disagreement with its policies. At the same time, given the very troubling human rights record of the Iraqi armed forces, an Arab version of the German Bundeswehr's concept of *Innere Führung*, or “inner guidance,” is essential. In other words, officers—indeed, all members of the force—must be indoctrinated in the understanding that no order, even from a democratically elected government, can justify violations of basic human rights.

Not only education and training but also the process of inducting candidates into the officer corps should be reformed. Assuming that Iraq will continue to use a system of conscription to fill the enlisted ranks of the military (see below), it should take the step of making a term of conscripted service in the ranks a prerequisite for attendance at the military academy and the receipt of an officer's commission. It should also diversify the training of officers by instituting something comparable to the American officer candidate schools,

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through which those who have already completed their military obligation in the enlisted ranks will have the opportunity to return to a career as an officer following completion of a civilian university education. This will weaken the residual grip of the culture heretofore cultivated at the military academy and, as in the case of the other proposed reforms, make the new Iraqi defense force a better mirror of Iraqi society.

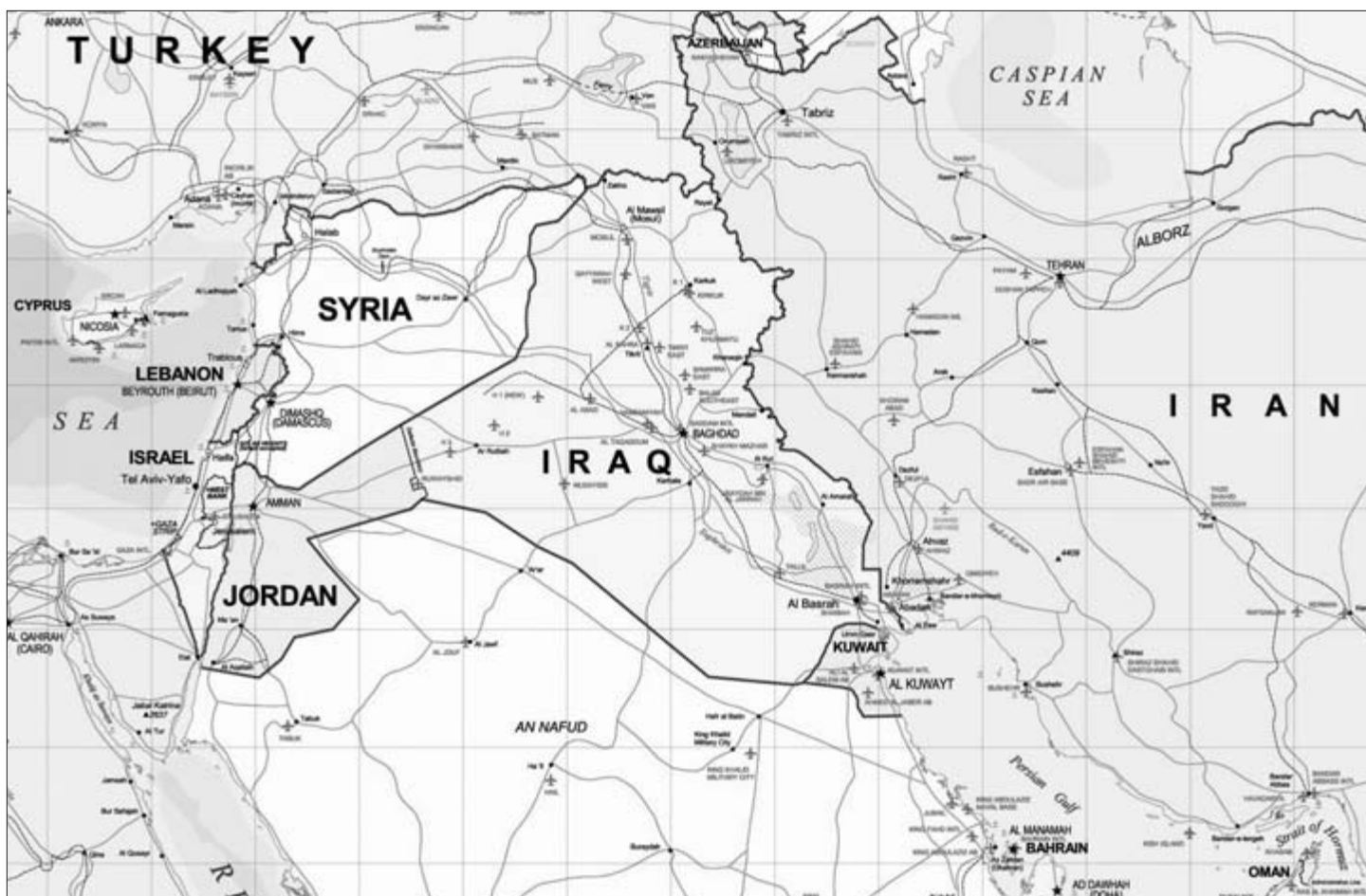
Reliance on Conscription

As suggested above, the enlisted ranks of the new Iraqi defense force will undoubtedly be filled through conscription. Conscription in Iraq has always been seen as a symbol of national independence, since it was instituted in part as a way of asserting Baghdad's right to make security policy notwithstanding British objections. In fact, it is even written into the constitution and has been since the beginning of the republic.¹⁵ Conscription is also the regional norm, the means by which most of Iraq's neighbors, including those countries perceived by Iraq as its most serious threats, fill their enlisted ranks. Moreover, it is a relatively inexpensive way to man a force in which high levels of individual proficiency are not required. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, conscription has been viewed in Iraq, as it was Italy in the 19th century and Israel in the

20th, as an important means of forging a national identity from among disparate religious and ethnic communities.¹⁶

Despite the American disposition in favor of an all-volunteer force, Iraqi reliance on conscription will not necessarily be a bad thing, especially if it can be administered in a way that helps reshape military culture. Under the monarchy, the early republic, and the Ba'athist dictatorship, the draft was of course a source of popular resentment, partly because conscription is never popular, partly because its burden fell disproportionately on already disadvantaged elements of society, and partly because it was overtly used as a tool of control. Despite this history, however, a new Iraq has the opportunity of using a fairly administered system of conscription to ensure that the military is more representative of the population. Without the leverage of conscription, there is little chance that the Kurds, and perhaps even many of the Shia, will enter the army, leaving it even more Sunni Arab-dominated than in the past and thus making it even more difficult to persuade Kurdish, Shia, and other militiamen to lay down their arms.

Young Iraqi men and their families may find themselves more willing to endure conscription if they are decently paid, housed, and fed. They should also be provided a modicum of technical training, not only to increase their military effectiveness but also to help position them for a more productive life after leaving the service. Perhaps most importantly, an entirely different approach to discipline and military justice will be required. Presumably an Iraqi military justice system will draw heavily on Islamic legal principles. In any case, the new Iraqi government should give careful consideration to structuring such a system so as to protect the interests of conscripts as well as the interests of the state—a balance that has rarely been taken into account in Iraqi military affairs. A German-style defense ombudsman, responsible to parliament and charged with protecting the rights of servicemembers against abuses, could be a further safeguard. Ultimately, if democratization of Iraq succeeds, the connections between conscripts and their families and elected representatives will serve as a check on unconstitutional uses of the armed forces. If it does not, a non-democratic government will find it more difficult to use an army that is manned, officered, and trained as described here as an instrument of repression.



Pitfalls to Avoid

With approximately 275,000 young Iraqi males coming of military age each year, it is reasonable to expect that some 180,000 would be taken into service after taking into account deferments and those unfit for service. An 18-month service obligation would yield a force of about 270,000 conscripts. Adding a reasonable proportion of officers and long-service noncommissioned officers, the total active force would fall somewhere in the range of 350,000, considerably smaller than the combined armed forces, paramilitary security forces, and irregular militias that constituted the armed population of the country before the war. A force of this size is not disproportionate to those of Iraq's neighbors (for example, Iran, 545,000; Syria, 354,000; Turkey, 515,000). Properly trained and equipped (which does not necessarily mean up to American or British standards), such a force, backed up by reserves, should suffice for defense against external threats without posing the threat to Iraq's

neighbors that could be presented by a highly trained professional force of the same size.

Strategically, Iraq does not need an offensively oriented military posture in the post-Saddam Gulf. While many Iraqis and other Arabs would undoubtedly like to see Iraq resume its supposed 1980s role as the counterweight to a hegemonic Iran, it would be a mistake for the United States to share that vision. For one thing, pitting Iraq and Iran against each other in the belief that a bipolar regional balance could be stabilizing turned out to be disastrously wrong. For another, the nature of the Iranian threat is such that Iraqi armed forces could play little direct role in defending anyone other than Iraq, unless, of course, they acquired the kind of countervailing weapons of mass destruction capabilities that the international community has sought for 13 years to keep out of their hands.

If the Iraqi military is not to have the international role that it sought in the past,

still less should it have the kind of domestic role that it has played since Iraq was formed following World War I. Iraqi governments have traditionally treated the armed forces, security and intelligence services, and police as more or less interchangeable instruments for achieving the same ends.¹⁷ As we have seen, this attitude was manifested in the routine use of the army and air force to carry out internal security functions. Even without the heavy dose of totalitarian ideology that permeated Iraqi military education over the decades, this immersion of the armed forces in what amount to domestic political issues would have tended to politicize the force and impair its professionalism. The limits within which the new Iraqi defense force will operate therefore need to be precisely defined and the boundaries between their functions and those of civilian law enforcement and security organizations strictly enforced. It is true that some other countries do not maintain such rigid compartmentalization between military and internal security functions and are still able to keep their armed

forces out of politics, but they do not have Iraq's political-military history.

Roles and Missions

Rather than serving as either an instrument for projecting Iraqi power in the region or a tool of domestic control, the reconstituted Iraqi force must be given the clear mission of defending Iraq itself—not the entire Arab world—against external aggression. Over time, the United States might look toward helping shape constructive, cooperative military ties among Iraq, the Gulf Cooperation Council states, Jordan, and Turkey, but fundamental changes in the attitudes and outlook of Iraq's new government and military must first take root before Iraq is assigned anything like a leading role beyond providing for its own defense.

In forging new military-to-military ties, there will be a temptation in the United States to assume that Iraq would be best served by a force structure that looks and operates like ours. We should avoid this trap. That Iraq could not produce a U.S.-style 21st-century military, even if it needed one, reflects a reality with which the United States—after decades of training and equipping other Arab military forces and after twice fighting the Iraqis themselves—should be well acquainted. This reality is that a society's overall culture determines its military culture. Within the U.S. military, recruiters and trainers are well aware that a force must be built using the raw materials that its society produces. As Michael Eisenstadt and Kenneth Pollack have pointed out, “a military doctrine created by one nation will inevitably reflect the dominant cultural traits of its society, and thus may not ‘fit’ another military.”¹⁸ Twenty-first century American doctrine is an even worse fit with the cultural dispositions of the men who will make up the Iraqi military than the British, Soviet, and French models that failed to take root in the past.

Perhaps this can be seen most clearly if we think about how American methods of command and control would work in an Iraqi context. Although the U.S. services use different terms to describe their approaches, all rely heavily on what the Germans call *Auftragstaktik*, usually translated into English as “directive control.” Commanders give their subordinates

general guidance, emphasizing the commander's intent and leaving it up to the discretionary judgment of the junior how best to carry out that intent. It is a system that depends on flexible, self-reliant officers, noncommissioned officers, and soldiers capable of making independent decisions in the heat of battle all the way down to the squad level.

This approach could only work for the Iraqi military if it were populated by young men—18- to 25-year-olds—who had been culturally conditioned to make individual

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decisions, to take personal responsibility, and to communicate with their superiors frankly and confidently. It should go without saying that Saddam's regime did not produce many young men with these behavioral traits. The fact is that these are not the kind of behavioral patterns that Arab societies anywhere tend to produce. As a result, Arab officers and soldiers have different standards, expectations, habits of thought, and styles of command than their American counterparts, with a much heavier reliance on top-down guidance and detailed instructions.

Doctrine and Equipment

To be at all effective in fulfilling its mission of defending the Iraqi homeland, a new Iraqi military must develop doctrines and methods that build on this reality rather than fighting against it. Iraqi ground forces have demonstrated the ability to conduct effective static defenses against opponents who are not capable of fast-moving modern maneuver warfare. Conversely, when Iraqi staffs and troops have had time to plan and rehearse set-piece offensives—as in the cases of the 1988 offensive that drove Iran off the Al-Faw Peninsula, the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, and the attack on al-Khafji, Saudi Arabia, during Operation *Desert Storm*—their forces have generally been able to execute plans effectively. Again, where they have problems is with an opponent who does not act as predicted by a plan. However, the new Iraq military is unlikely

to have to fight the kind of opponent with which the Iraqi armed forces—and Arab forces in general—have problems. Other major military forces in the region, with the exception of the Israelis, fight in much the same style as the Iraqis do, while any potential conflict with Israel would likely be conducted on entirely different terms.

This understanding of the kind of force Iraq needs and can reasonably produce should carry over to issues of equipment. Just as the United States should not seek to export its doctrine and organizational methods, it should also resist pressure (either Iraqi or American) to provide large quantities of advanced American weaponry, and particularly to pursue the kind of sweeping replacement of Soviet-origin with U.S.-origin arms that has been attempted in Egypt. In the first place, there will be countless competing claims on Iraqi financial resources that should rightly have a far higher priority than reequipping the Iraqi military. Moreover, even if Iraq had unlimited resources, the United States needs to be sensitive to the claim—taken as an article of faith in much of the Arab world—that it sells expensive but unusable hardware only as an indirect means of getting its hands on Arab oil money. From a military point of view, the normal rationale for preferring that friends and allies buy American—that doing so promotes interoperability—really does not apply. Realistically, there is little chance that Iraqi forces will be called upon to fight side by side with American forces against a common enemy.¹⁹

It is not certain at this stage how much Iraqi military equipment survived the recent war. By the time a new Iraqi military force is up and running, the picture will be clearer. It seems likely that, despite the effectiveness of coalition operations, a substantial quantity of hardware probably did survive, if only because it was unserviceable and therefore never deployed for combat. In any case, when the time comes, first priority should be given to salvaging what was not destroyed and putting it back into working order. The United States should at that point be willing to support lifting of the UN Security Council ban on sales of military equipment to Iraq for the limited purpose of allowing sales of spare parts and repair and maintenance services, even though most of the business of providing those spares will inevitably flow to Russian, French, and other companies. Notwithstanding the political

unpalatability of allowing those who opposed the liberation of Iraq to participate in the revival of its armed forces, doing so will be more cost effective than reequipping the Iraqi forces with American hardware. Over time, the prohibitions on arms sales can be lifted more completely. At that point, American firms will be able to compete for the business, but by then procurement decisions will be those of a fully sovereign Iraqi government and therefore less likely to be seen as decisions taken under U.S. pressure.

Conclusions

It is impossible to convey the scope of the reforms necessary in building a new Iraqi defense force without making reference to the methods other countries have used to address comparable problems. At the same time, we must keep in mind that post-Saddam Iraq is not the same as post-Nazi Germany, post-communist Eastern Europe or Russia, or post-apartheid South Africa. The problems and prospects facing Iraq are not even perfectly comparable to those that have been encountered by other Arab militaries.

In approaching the rebuilding task, we must be careful not to do too much. Iraqis themselves must have a say in the shape of their new military force. The more we impose our own solutions on Iraqi strategic problems, the more we will trigger the anti-imperialist reflex that is never far beneath the surface in Iraq. It is essential that the new government and its army embrace the principles of constitutional civilian control, military professionalism, respect for human rights, as well as ethnic and religious inclusiveness described above, but we need to be conscious that making such a radical break with history will create stresses within the Iraqi body politic.

As we have seen in the former Soviet Union, reforms instituted under external pressure—especially in the national security sphere—often serve as rallying points for nostalgic reaction, with potentially damaging effects for the governments that accede to them. On top of this, there are already many permanent constraints placed on Iraqi national security policy by the UN Security Council—the requirements to renounce weapons of mass destruction, recognize Kuwaiti independence and respect the UN-defined boundary, and refrain from threats against its neighbors. Given the way they were brought up, many

Iraqis, and not just unreconstructed Ba'athists, will find these restrictions burdensome and unfair. Insisting on U.S. practices and policies more extensively than necessary, whether in doctrine and training or in how threats are defined, will magnify that sense of unfairness and could well trigger a reaction that will jeopardize the entire political-military edifice that we are struggling to construct.

the more we impose our own solutions on Iraqi strategic problems, the more we will trigger the anti-imperialist reflex that is never far beneath the surface in Iraq

At some point, Iraq will again have the resources to develop military capabilities outside the control of either the United States or the United Nations. It is therefore at the level of political intentions, political control of the military, and reformed institutional culture that efforts to prevent a repeat of Iraqi history must be focused. For eight decades, Iraqi leaders tried to use an army to build a nation-state, and the results for the Iraqi people were catastrophic. This time, building the military must be secondary to building the nation-state. That is the only way to prevent a new Iraqi military force from undercutting the objective that the coalition sought to achieve in waging war against Saddam and his cronies: a democratic Iraq at peace with its neighbors and with its own people.

Notes

¹ Human Rights Watch, *Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal Campaign against the Kurds* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993), accessed at <<http://hrw.org/reports/1993/iraqanfal/ANFALINT.htm>>.

² Human Rights Watch, "The Iraqi Government Assault on the Marsh Arabs," January 2003, accessed at <<http://www.hrw.org/background/mena/marsharabs1.htm>>.

³ Ahmed Hashim, "Saddam Hussein and Civil-Military Relations in Iraq," *Middle East Journal* 57, no. 1 (Winter 2003), 12–13. In a confidential memorandum written in March 1933, King Faisal I made clear that he saw the lack of a military force capable of "leading the people against their will" as the only obstacle to sweeping aside the traditional social structure of the country. See also Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 321.

⁴ Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6–7.

⁵ Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1985), 47–48.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁷ Hashim, 18–25.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁹ Paul Wolfowitz, remarks at town hall meeting with Iraqi-American community in Dearborn, Michigan, February 23, 2003, accessed at <<http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2003/sp20030223-depscedef0042.html>>.

¹⁰ Anthony Shadid, "As 48-Hour Deadline Ticks Down, Baghdad Loses Its Bravado," *The Washington Post*, March 19, 2003. According to David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace* (New York: Avon, 1989), 306, the proclamation was actually drafted in London by Sir Mark Sykes, a villain to Arabs for his involvement in the Sykes-Picot agreement by which the Arab East was divided into British and French zones of influence.

¹¹ In addition to about 650,000 inactive reservists.

¹² The value of having a member of parliament as minister of defense in the Iraqi case is that a minister who is solely indebted to the president for his position is less likely to resist potential presidential efforts to use the armed forces as a political instrument. This precaution may not be needed in countries where there is a better-established tradition of apolitical military professionalism. In Iraq, the more checks and balances built into the civil-military relationship, the better.

¹³ Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq* (New York: Random House, 2002), 159.

¹⁴ Article 31(c) of the 1970 Interim Constitution states, "The State alone establishes the Armed Forces. No other organization or group is entitled to establish military or paramilitary formations." Essentially, the same provision was contained in Article 79 of the 1964 Interim Constitution. It goes without saying that Iraqi regimes have treated these documents with utter contempt. For instance, the 1964 edition shamelessly states that "spreading political and party ideas in the ranks of the Armed Forces by any means is absolutely forbidden." They are cited here as indications of the ideas that the rulers of the country thought it appropriate to express, not as describing the way the government actually functioned.

¹⁵ The present provision, contained in Article 31(a) of the 1970 Interim Constitution, reads, "The defense of the homeland is a sacred duty and honor for the citizens; conscription is compulsory and regulated by the law."

¹⁶ Marr, 66.

¹⁷ Article 78 of the 1964 Interim Constitution actually defined police, security, and guard forces, along with the army, as integral parts of the armed forces.

¹⁸ Michael J. Eisenstadt and Kenneth M. Pollack, "Armies of Snow and Armies of Sand: The Impact of Soviet Military Doctrine on Arab Militaries," *Middle East Journal* 55, no. 4 (Autumn 2001), 577.

¹⁹ Some may argue that U.S. and Iraqi forces might someday fight Iran together, but it is hard to imagine any democratic (that is, Shi'ah-dominated) Iraqi government supporting such a war, nor is it likely that any American combatant commander would want to depend on an Iraqi force in conducting one. In any case, a cornerstone of U.S. planning for the new Iraqi military must be that it is building a defensively oriented force without any significant ability to project force outside its borders.

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